



# Observations of a Retired Veteran

HENRY C. TINSLEY

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# Observations of a Retired Veteran

By Henry C. Tinsley  
("P. Boyzy")



ALBERT SHULTZ

Staunton, Va.

1904

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## Introduction.



THE essays contained in this little book comprise a selection from many of a like character which were contributed at intervals through a series of years to the columns of the VINDICATOR, a weekly newspaper of Staunton, Virginia, by its editor, the late Henry C. Tinsley, under the pen-name of "P. Boyzy." The perusal of them in their present form will serve to confirm the opinion of those who read them as they then appeared, that they possess in marked degree the unusual quality of a winning humor coupled with the pathos that is often humor's most exquisite accompaniment; and that they combine a shrewd if homely wit with a profound knowledge of the workings of the human heart.

¶ In the more strenuous life of political journalism, to which Mr. Tinsley devoted his energies from the time when he laid down his arms at the close of the War between the States to the beginning of his last lingering illness, these "Observations" were for him but an inadequate outlet for the expression of the courageous and hopeful philosophy which was always his distinguishing characteristic. To cover his pain with a jest,—to preach without cant the gospel of love,—to do the best that he could do accord-

ing to the lights before him — these generous motives and high purposes are to be read between the lines by those who knew him as legibly as if they shone out in words upon the printed page.

¶ During his lifetime he was frequently asked to gather into book form these little essays which had delighted so many of the readers of his newspaper; but to all such requests he smilingly turned a deaf ear. His innate modesty esteemed their value at far below their real worth. They are given here just as they were written by him and printed in the VINDICATOR, without change or correction other than of typography. It goes without saying that if their author might have revised them with a view to their publication in a permanent form, there would probably have been many changes; but it is believed that as they came warm from heart and brain, they will serve to reproduce him most vividly for those who knew him best and to illustrate once more for them in all its dignity and sweetness the simple courage of his life.

¶ It is for such friends that this book is published.

ARMISTEAD C. GORDON.

Staunton, Virginia.

October, 1904.





## Biographical Sketch.



**HENRY C. TINSLEY** was born April 7, 1834, in Richmond, Virginia, and lived on the corner of Franklin and Governor streets, in his father's residence, which was opposite the old WHIG office. His father was a native of Ireland and died at the early age of 28, the day after the birth of his only daughter, Ella, who was educated at the Virginia Female Institute in Staunton, while presided over by the Rev. Dr. Phillips. She and his mother have since died, and it is not believed that he has at this time any living relative.

¶ Mr. Tinsley's education was obtained at the old Richmond Academy of that city, a classical school. In his 18th year he began his journalistic career as a reporter for the Richmond DISPATCH, in which profession of his choice he soon attracted attention.

¶ The war coming on, he enlisted in the Richmond Howitzers and served during the whole war as a faithful and brave soldier.

¶ After the war he returned to the Richmond DISPATCH and soon became one of the most valued men upon its working corps.

¶ Early in the '70's he became by purchase, half owner and editor of the Staunton VINDICATOR, being associated with the late W. H. H. Lynn until 1876 when Mr. Lynn sold his interest to Capt T. C. Morton. The paper was then for eight years conducted under the style of Tinsley & Morton. After this Capt. Morton retired from the paper and his eldest son, A. S. Morton, became in turn half owner, the firm continuing as before until 1895 when it was dissolved, Mr. R. S. Turk purchasing the office and good will of the VINDICATOR and consolidating it with the SPECTATOR, since which time it has been known as the Staunton SPECTATOR and VINDICATOR, Mr. Tinsley retiring from the paper of which he had been chief editor for twenty-four years.

¶ Mr. Tinsley died in Staunton, after a long and painful illness, August 21, 1902.





# **Observations of a Retired Veteran**

## **I**

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**I** SAW the Sweet Harbinger of Spring last week. A violet? No. A swallow? No. A bud? No. Ah! no; put up your encyclopedia of Spring information and I'll tell you. It was the annual boy with his shoes off for the first time since the warm weather. He stepped gingerly; he stood still longer than usual; he hoisted the bottom of his foot for inspection often; he let a cat go by, though a rock lay in a yard of him; he picked out a velvety place on the tan-bark sidewalk before he put his feet firmly down and squared himself on them to give the two-finger whistle for his chum, which is the terror to the nervous. Much of the boy had gone out of him. He moved with the motion and sloth of decrepit age. Next week you will not know him for the same boy. His feet will be hardened, he will dance over the macadamized streets with the callosity of a stone-crusher, and the fugacious cat will be lucky if it gets its tail through the fence in time. The mourner's bench humility of to-day will have changed to the noisy glee of the hardened criminal. His baseball practice will pervade the middle of every street, and his large and assorted stock of general trouble and annoyance will be displayed under all our noses with the request that we will call and examine before purchasing elsewhere. I cannot understand how any man can be indifferent to the blessings of the church, when he remembers that one of them is the Sunday School—invented by the Fathers as an ingenious and effective place of torment for this Boy. Through the week he is intolerable, but the blessed Sabbath is to him a day of retribution. It is the awful day when his ears are washed and touseled about; when his eyes are punched out by the towelled but unsparing hand of a Christian mother; when his shoes are put back on him for a day, and when, with a neck encircled by a collar starched to maddening stiffness, and with

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a pocket handkerchief the consistency of paste-board, he is sent to the place of punishment. I have read many beautiful poems about the sweet quiet of the Sabbath, but few of the poets have given the right solution of it. It is because all over the civilized world on that day, millions of Boys have been captured and corraled in Sunday schools. The very church bells understand it, and in the early hours ring out triumphantly, "Got-'em-in-here! Got-'em-in-here!"

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Of course, as we move on through this alternately delightful and disagreeable world, we must be brought face to face with bores of many varieties. Setting aside that pest, the egotist, for whom there can be no excuse, I should like to mention the man or woman who conceives that the way to talk about books is to deal with the acts and characters instead of what they say. It seems to me that it is just one of the modes, if I may call it that, of talking literature that is little better than no mode at all. It is a rare thing to meet with even the most modern work—I am speaking of fiction—by a fairly successful writer, that does not contain some utterance to arouse thought and challenge us to mental debate. The acts must of necessity be commonplace from familiarity, for man has behaved himself for a million of years from the same motives and only varied his manner with the advancing material circumstances which surrounded him. But his thoughts are not obliged to be commonplace. The thoughts of men are marching in ever moving procession towards the Light, and as each one emerges from the darkness it catches on its forehead a ray which transforms it. It is these that are to be discussed when we talk about books, and not the mere acts of the actors therein. What, as a matter of conversation, is the suicide of Dido, compared with the fine lines in which she so touchingly sum-

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marizes what her life would have been had the false Æneas never seen her? I lately heard two exceptionally intelligent young people discussing the novel — Put Yourself in His Place — which though a very second rate work was written with a very first rate purpose. Their criticism and discussion was confined wholly to the action of the characters and they seemed to have thought the purpose of no account compared with the plot and love-making. And it is not young people alone who are given to this skimming process. I have known people who really deserved the title of readers, to find their chief if not their only criticism in the decision of how well this or that character was drawn, and what surprises the plot contained; while as to the thoughts, good or bad, old or novel, the critics seemed to be oblivious. If we expect really to improve ourselves by books — still I am speaking of fiction — we should try to remember and afterwards discuss the thoughts they contained and which we found in the mouths of the characters or in the comments of the author. There has never been in my recollection a time when the fiction of the day was more completely abreast of the advancing thought of the world, or in which it teemed with more new and practical views logically connected with passing events and new situations. It is when, closing the book, we take away with us those seeds and subject them to the attrition of discussion, which wears off the pollen, that we arrive at, possibly, a new and valuable thought which may deserve the name of knowledge.

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“It seems to me your observations are nothing but opinions,” said Mrs. Boyzy to me the other evening. She called it o-pin-ions. Women have an art of expressing contempt by syllabic emphasis that men never acquire. It is their failure to accomplish this that induces men to substitute profanity. Nevertheless, as that excellent

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woman remarked, the things I say in these papers are for the most part opinions. But what of that; what moves the world but opinions—what has moved it up to where it is now, but opinions? Where would the world be if it were not for new opinions; where would men be? Suppose every public man clung to precedents in public affairs; every politician pinned his faith on his party policy, and every preacher planted himself on orthodoxy—all with a determination to go no further. The world would come to a standstill. There would be no progress. Opinions are the lever that works the world. Precedents become mouldy, politicians change with the times, and creeds advance with the public thought. What do we care what a man thought two hundred years ago, when we have what a man thinks to-day? What is to us the policy of a political party when the moss has commenced to grow over it. Who would attempt to enforce in this day the mediæval creeds and religious practices and church government? What are we put here for, if it is not to learn, every year, every day, every hour if we can. And of what use is all this learning if we are not to advance by means of it? And how could we move a step if we did not tell our neighbor what we think we have learned—that is, tell him our opinions. I say to you, Madam (and I say it the more freely that she is out of hearing), that opinions rule the world, and while it may be possible that mine do not rule my own household, it impairs their value no more than imprisonment and persecution did those of other philosophers in the past. An opinion is a valuable thing—in its information if it is true, in the mental exercise it gives in combating it, if it is error, and in any event as a feather that indicates which way the wind is blowing—in what direction the blind mole of man's finite judgment is groping around its prison in search of an outlet to the infinite. And that is true, Madam, whether you call them opinions, or o-pin-ions!



## **Observations of a Retired Veteran**

### **II**

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YOU have been to the Conference? So have I, but it was twelve years ago. Still I shall never forget a scene I witnessed there. It was in the same Methodist church that this one is being held in. For days I had been interested in a plain, homely-faced minister, considerably past his half century, who came in evidently with great pain on crutches. The town bell striking the hour was not more punctual than the sound of his crutches. His hands were distorted by rheumatism, his limbs twisted, and his face had a patient look as of one who had suffered for a hundred years. His face was rough, but somewhere about its expression there was a graciousness that attracted my attention. One other expression in it struck me; it was the air of a man who had finished his work. Not that he hadn't frequent consultations with the ministers who approached him, or showed any lack of interest in what was going on, but just a look as if he was doing anything for the last time. Once he got up and made an official report of some kind to the Bishop. As he closed it, his eyes burned with an intense anxiety and he opened his lips as if to say something. But it was left unsaid, and as he painfully resumed his seat the old look returned. As the close of the Conference approached, I saw him several times with his head bent over the back of the pew. It was on an evening very near the close. The rays of the westering March sun shone through the windows with a cold, cheerless light. His name was called. He raised his head. His face was flushed. He struggled to his feet and with his crutches hobbled around the aisle to the front of the pulpit, where he stood, balancing himself on his crutches. And then the story came out. It was told to those in the seats rather than to the Bishop. He had entered the ministry young and had hoped to give his whole life to God. But of late years disease had overtaken him.



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He had struggled against it and tried to do his duty through great suffering, but lately he had found that he could be of no further use and he asked — here he paused and turned from the pews to the Bishop. It seemed that he was about to say something that he had striven for years not to say. His eyes filled and in a thick voice he said: "I ask to be put on the superannuated list." And then he sat down on the nearest seat and wept like a child. What it would have broken the heart of other men to have staid in, it broke his heart to leave. I viewed him with intense curiosity. Five or six of his brother ministers came up one by one, and silently took hold of his twisted hands. I don't think they said a word; I am sure he did not. He did not look at them, for his head was buried on one of his cheap, home-made crutches, and from his pocket he had taken a worn and faded handkerchief, with which he was checking his tears. After he had gotten back to his pew, some ministers here and there over the audience got up and testified to what the man had been and what work he had done. Some of them had seen him, crippled as he was and suffering the agony of rheumatism, driving miles through the falling snow to fill an appointment to preach. Somehow it seemed to me a eulogy of the dead — and it was. When I saw him the next morning he had the air of a man who had met a great loss, instead of a man who had just parted with a life of labor and physical anguish, but there was still the last time look about him. And it was the last time. In six months from that time he was dead. What shall we say when such a life of self-sacrifice passes on to the stars? What can we say, except to speculate on the boundless possibilities that eternity must contain for such a life. What must such a little minute-hand life as sixty years, develop into on the dial plate of eternity, when it is begun as this man's was. Such a man as this, it seems to me, must at

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some time or other have touched the very hem of the Master's garment.



¶ I saw in your paper this week an expression which continues to run through my head. It is an advertisement of a poultryman for poultry, in which he says with rough frankness, "Old roosters not wanted." Whether it is good policy in him, while attempting to secure tender and succulent birds for the clerical stomach, to affront that venerable class of fowls upon which we sinners are to live long after the clergy have left, I will not say. I do not believe, however, that it will go unresented or unpunished. I believe that many an old rooster will so beplume himself and take on such an extra strut, that he will at last succeed in forcing himself as a young bird between the teeth of our clerical visitors. This will be a sweet revenge. But with this I have nothing to do; what I have now to do with, is the fact that over every department of life I see the same announcement. In society where the sweet amenities of life are monopolized by the young, the aged beau is met by the flaming inscription, "Old roosters not wanted." In politics we hear the cry that the favorite candidate is a representative of the "Young Democracy" or "Young Republicans," as the case may be, and that, except at the ballot-box, "Old roosters are not wanted." If a congregation loses its pastor and commences looking around for a successor, the first thing it does is to print in large letters across the pulpit, "Old roosters not wanted." Across the door of every new enterprise is the same inscription. What, I desire to know, is to become of us old roosters? Not fit for broiling, too tough for roasting, too old for congressmen, for preachers—what are you going to do with us? Ah, the very question shows where we stand. It used to be a few years ago, what we were going to do with you,

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but the tables have been turned and now it seems to me that the cemetery gate is the only place not decorated with the legend, "Old roosters not wanted." There they are more than welcome; indeed, if it were not for their patronage that institution would do an amount of business very unsatisfactory to its stockholders. Having then this refuge, brethren, let us take courage! Let us take consolation in the thought that we have gotten over so much of the rough road over which those following us have yet to travel, and that having once passed that portal we shall have reached perfect peace. Let us find a spiteful satisfaction in the fact that long after we have entered the silent gates, the young roosters will still have to rise early and crow hungrily for corn, still will have to skirmish with other roosters for bread, and the highest pole in the roost, and that as they show up in the race of life, they will have to read, in their turn, the fatal sign-board along the track—"Old roosters not wanted."





# **Observations of a Retired Veteran**

## **III**

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**I** HAVE often heard people lament ill-health because, they say, sickness loses to a man friends. On the contrary, I hold that it brings him many new and unexpected ones. Let me see—December 15,—July; seven months; that was long enough to make the experiment, wasn't it? Well, let me look over some of the new friends I have made lying all this time in bed. The first new friend that I made, and one who had evidently seen better days, was a Tomato Can, that ever present denizen of the back-yard. On his head he jauntily flew a cocked hat bearing a damaged new picture of himself evidently taken in youth, and across his red waistcoat, in blue letters, was the word "Trophy." There he stood, day after day, leaning jauntily against the doubtful company of a whiskey barrel hoop, telling me the time of day, as if that was his only business in life. If the sun's light lay across his red stomach it was 9 o'clock, if it glistened on his cocked hat it was noon, and if it soberly lighted up the cherry red tomato on his side, it was 6 o'clock. "Sir," he seemed to say, "I have not been always as you see me. I have seen the day when I roosted on the highest shelf in the family grocery, and when I was dusted daily by well dressed clerks—if the employer was around. I was for many years the tenant of a French plate glass window and I have been carried by the soft hand of Beauty, sir, and laid gently in the market-basket. I do not boast, but Beauty itself has carried me through the streets in its arm. I have seen great larks, sir. I have travelled that Main Street at the rate of a mile a minute at the tail of valuable dogs, and at the midnight hour I have bounced into the midst of cat caucuses with great sport. I have been the friend of Man, sir, but what has Man done for me. He has left me here in this miserable back-yard, company of barrel-hoops and brick-bats and bottles. He has—" But here the next door neighbor's ser-

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vant threw a bucket of slop-water on my friend and cut off his complaint. His red vest peeled down a little further, his cocked hat depressed further over his face, and a potato skin stopped his mouth. How true it is that no person can be in such disreputable circumstances that he has not the remembrance of better days to soothe him, and like the Tomato Can, ever find true comfort in the top-shelf on which he long ago may have roosted.



¶ But as a new friend, the Street must always take the first place with a sick man. How new everything in the Street becomes to the man who views it from a sick bed! You would think he had never seen it before. Nor has he. No man in health lies and sees the Street wake up in the morning. Nor does the man in health, walking about the Street, see how prettily it goes to sleep. The lengthening shadows make it drowsy for a little while, but as evening comes it makes a great stir. It sends hundreds of hustling people along its walks hurrying home. It lights up hundreds of windows and shop fronts and looks as much as to say, "I think I will make a night of it. I've sent all the children to bed and now I'll have a time of it." But the steady old Street on which I live gives up its dissipated idea early, turns off light after light, and soon the lonely sidewalks are without a passenger. The Street does one thing for the sick man you wouldn't expect; it arouses a spirit of rebellion that is astonishing. Resignation is a beautiful virtue, but it chiefly exists on side streets and out of town. The man who is sick on a main street and professes to be resigned is a hypocrite. My friend, the Street, presents to me Thompson. What do I say? "Ah, Thompson, take the blessing of a sick man?" Not a bit of it. I say, what right has Thompson to be walking along attending to business and possibly taking sur-

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reptitious cooling drinks, while I am doomed to staring out of the window and drinking beef tea? But Thompson don't drink? Oh, well, what do I care if he don't! I threw that in about drinks to make it as hard on him as possible. It makes a good point on a man just to suggest it. There; there goes Robinson going to church with a new suit on, and a wife hanging on his arm! What has he done to deserve that sort of luck? Why, isn't he up here flat of his back—and there they all go. Resigned? Ah, no, the sick are not resigned. It is only the dead who are resigned.



¶ A perfectly new friend is the Sky. How often does one in health look at the Sky save to see about the weather? But once a year. But in sickness it is an ever present friend. You watch for day breaks in it, and for the fading stars, and find an exciting interest in which of two stars will go out first, something like you were betting on a race. And then the figures in the blue field all day long; for it is not at evening and night alone that they appear. What have I not seen march across my window in the procession—a castle, a fan, a swan, a kerosene can, the king of spades, a cream jug, troops of angels, in short, anything that an idle imagination wants to conjure up. And when it dresses for the evening, in what glorious costumes does it appear. But all that is garish compared with the Sky upon which the night has settled down. That is the sort of Sky to bring calmness and content. The quiet lighting up of the stars, with no step ladders and no hurried match scratching of the police; the ease with which the moon climbs up her route, no puffing, no machinery clanking; the deepening of the blue to better show the celestial sparks that glow on it—and the knowledge that all this will go on without failure and without your having to turn over in bed to work some lever to help it move, makes the coming of



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night a comfort to the sick. Who thinks of the stars in health? No one. We think of supper, of the theatre, of the band concert, of the church, of the lecture—but who thinks of the stars they are walking under. It is given to the sick to remember them, and in return they remember the sick. Whoever else fails us the Stars are there. Steady, faithful, unchanging, always waiting. Shall I remember them after this? Ah, I can't tell, I am like the rest and will soon forget them in the busy street. But to-night while all is still, I look with reverence and curiosity on our future homes, my newest friends, the Stars.



¶ Another new friend is the News Gatherer. I give you my word that one sick man gets more news—political, gossip, scandal—than any twenty well ones. You see he is always there and easy to find. Human nature can't keep news long and it always hunts up the man that is easy to find and unloads on him. There is a sense of security in talking to a man flat of his back—he can't get out to repeat it. Many things combine to make the News Gatherer the sick man's friend. He is helpless, weak and can't talk back. That secures a good listener. He is sick and wants to be entertained. That makes him an eager listener. And finally being confined and unable to get out he is presumably an empty vessel waiting to be filled. And with this inviting prospect the News Gatherer moves his machine up to the side of the bed and monotonously pumps, pumps, pumps. It is well for that kindly hearted man that the patient is not only stretched out on his bed, but also unarmed. Ah! how many men earn sudden death and yet in the mystery of Providence escape it! I have often wondered at the persistency with which habit has fixed on women the exclusive reputation of gossipers. For I say unto you, brethren, that Woman, who

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with empty head and silly tongue toys with her neighbor's character unto its destruction, is not more full of gossip than her brother Man, who knows better and yet cannot stand the temptation of a sick man and a safe chance to chatter about matters with which he has no business. I am afraid like the idea of original sin we all have just a little spice of it.

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¶ A relief to this friend, and a friend I never saw before, was my Moth. I think he came into the world about February, having been deceived by the hot room into the belief that Spring had come. Many days after, when snow could be seen on the ground, I have seen him feebly climbing up the window pane and looking out with the air of one whose whole life had been a dreadful mistake. The first time I saw him was one night sitting in the light and heat of the lamp, his grey wing shining like silver and his brown little body giving a soft, velvety light, his face grave with owl-like stupidity, and two big black eyes. After the snow passed away he seemed to get settled, and at night would sit on a match-box staring for hours at the lamp, as one who should say, "Well, I understand the medicine vials, and the blisters, and the ink-stand, and all that, but this great bright thing is quite beyond me." He never once thought of flying into it to see how it was done, and I thought of writing to the Bug Professor at the Smithsonian that here was a species of moth that light did not attract. But what will not bad company do? After the warm weather came and the windows were open, what should come in but other moths, of little character I think, who commenced pranks of humming and buzzing and butting the lamp. My Moth watched it with deep interest for two nights, but on the second night, I saw from his rubbing his nose with his paws that he was getting excited. Sure enough

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on the third night he remarked, " Well, I guess I'll try a little of that myself," and hopping back to the mucilage bottle for a start he took a header at the lamp. Except that his silver wings trembled, and his velvet legs drew up, he never moved again. I had lost a good friend whose innocent ramblings I had watched for hours and whose antics, when he tasted the ink or got a sniff of the ammonia, had much amused me. I don't know that he died too early. He had learned a bad habit, and for a man or a Bug who has learned a bad habit, I am not certain that death can come too soon. He died thinking he knew everything worth knowing, for I have no doubt that through the panes of my window and across my narrow street he thought he had seen the World. Just as we larger, but not wiser animals think that after gazing through our little theological panes, we have seen clear through Eternity, and into the mind of the Father. After all, my Moth was not worse off than the rest of us. We have all our little streets which we call the World, and our little pane of glass through which we think we see all that is worth seeing, and we need but a soupcon of bad example to make us blindly dash into the worst of follies. Let us never forget that, more than for this Moth, there is for us an unseen Hand that after these follies picks us up and starts us on our course again, with a pitying touch, and that, more than this, when the last twilight of evening shall gather around us, and the hands of those we love can be no longer seen, there shall appear to us through the gray mist of Death, that bright and gentle Hand, and with it the face of a Father and a Friend.



**Observations of a Retired Veteran**  
**IV**

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**F**MUST tell you of the Major's Last Love. I had thought I would leave it in my note book, but a letter, which I can only read through a mist of tears, has changed my mind.

¶ Strolling out as the sun was setting, on the first evening of my stay at a village hotel last summer, I saw two shadows cast across the street; one so very long, and one so very short, as to look ridiculous. They were the shadows of the Major and his Last Love. The Major, hatless, was swinging musingly the torn straw hat of his love, while the little three-year-old lady herself was struggling along with the Major's hat piled with flowers and toys and tea-cups on her return from having "a party" on the river edge. The little feet stumbled, the party crockery flew, and the two shadows melted in one as the prattling owner and the tall Major knelt together to gather them up. That was my first sight of the Major and his love.

¶ I cannot say that any of us knew, or came to know, all about the Major; always excepting that we loved him. He was tall, straight, and frost-haired. His regular features were of that sort that might have belonged to a man of forty-five or a man of sixty, and he was a changeable sort of a person who one day would look one age and the next another. Of his means, we knew absolutely nothing. It was said that his wealth had been carried away by the civil war and that he was living on a small but sufficient remainder, which was doubtless true. Over his gray moustache there was a blue eye that sometimes looked as it might belong to a boy of eighteen and sometimes had the weary look of a man long acquainted with grief. His skin was as soft as a woman's and often suffused with a faint blush which would have better become a woman. He was the very spirit of gentleness to both men and women, and it seemed hard to realize, looking at him, that, as we heard after-

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wards, this man had been wounded and captured in a battle and set apart to be executed in reprisal. We did not learn that from him, for he never talked about himself, but from an old army comrade who met him and was the only man that we boarders ever saw the Major familiar with. Not that he was distant, but after a gentle smile of salutation or recognition he never seemed anxious to converse, and like most men, silence gave him an air of mystery. There were many solutions of the mystery by the lady boarders, particularly by Mrs. Pointlace, a restless little widow, who was never at peace unless she was in love with somebody or somebody was in love with her. Her theory was that the Major had suffered, at some period or other, a great shock to his affections—a supposition that failed to find confirmation in the regular appetite and the eccentric neatness of the person who had received the shock. Whether the lady's theory was correct or not, none of us had an opportunity to know, for we would as soon have expected to see the Major come into the dining-room without his coat as to have heard him speak of his personal affairs. The widow was a new boarder; if she had been there as long as the rest of us she would have known that whatever he might have suffered in the past, the Major's heart was now full to the brim of affection for a female, and that female not longer than his arm. ¶ She couldn't have been over three years old, and was the only girl among four boys, running up like stair steps. I can see her now under a broad summer hat that would have covered the top of a barrel. The crown had given away and her little blue eyes would be oftener looking out through the gap than from under the brim. Her stockings were never both tied up at the same time, except when her mother turned her over, fresh dressed, in the morning to the Major, or when she put on her "tose" in the evening to walk with him. How the Major had gotten

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such possession of her, I think even her father and mother hardly knew, but certain it was that she had become his personal property. They went the rounds of the town stores every day, and took long walks from which the little lady always came back tired and asleep in the arms of the "Mady," as she called him. I suppose sometimes the Major had carried her for miles, and he would mount the steps of the hotel veranda in those sultry days, mopping his face wet from fatigue. And then he would unload his pockets of all the shells and rocks and sticks and strings that the little one had gathered in the waking part of her walk, and put them away for her carefully. One day the usual load had a marked variety in the shape of a large watermelon and three kittens. In managing all of which the little lady was assisting by bringing one kitten tail foremost under each arm. Much time was spent by the little tyrant in directing the Major as to where each article of that remarkable load was to go. If she had become the Major's property, I think I may say that the Major had also become her property. I think that on rainy days from his vest to his heels, the Major's clothing was marked with little muddy foot prints; that his hat was used as a carryall for all manner of toys and sweetmeats; that his watch was demanded at all hours of the day to see if it was "bekfus time" yet, and that his cane served as an Arab steed for races around the porch without limit. The "Mady" and all he had were the undisturbed possession of the little one.

¶ It was the close of the summer that, one morning, the little one did not appear. She was sick of fever, they said. At breakfast, the Major looked disturbed. But in a hotel we are not apt to think seriously of the troubles of our neighbors, even if they are next door to us, and few of us thought to ask about the baby. One night coming in late from the theatre, I saw a large



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rocking chair at the end of the floor on which the baby slept, and I was astonished on looking closer to see the Major in it. His gentle face had a worn and weary look on it, and the waiter told me next morning that the Major had walked the hall pretty much all night for several nights, and that he had carried the chair there for him to rest in. The baby, the waiter said, was not likely to live. As I went up after breakfast, I stopped to inquire, and the little one's mother, whose eyes were red with weeping, said I could come in, adding, "It would hardly make any difference, now." There sat the Major by the bed, with all manner of toys and dolls spread out on the coverlet, before the sick child's eyes. Like a man's idea of doing something, he had bought them. Poor fellow! it was all he could think of to do. The little blue eyes were changed and the thin little hands were restless. They would pick out a toy and lay it aside, and then the dear old Major would arrange them freshly, so as to attract her attention. I think she was delirious, for she asked that her "tose" be given her, that she might talk with the "Mady." And then the poor fellow would look up to the mother, and say: "I think she can to-morrow, madam; I think she can to-morrow, don't you?"

¶ I think he hardly knew what he said it for, except with the vague idea of giving somebody hope. Anyhow, his voice seemed to arouse the little one, and she drew her little thin hand over his face, and said, in an inquiring tone, "Mady?" I think the world was floating out of sight and she wasn't certain. The Major turned, with a look of alarm, to the mother at the window, and said, "Oh, do you think—" But whatever he was going to ask was answered before he asked it, for the mother leaned her head against the window pane and sobbed. He looked around the room quickly, as one who would look for help from somewhere, he knew not where, and then slipping out of his chair to his knees by the

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bedside, took the child's hand and laid his head on the coverlet. It seemed to stop the fast going spirit for a moment, and the other little thin hand wandered to the gray head and nestled there, and once more the weak voice said "Mady." As I softly closed the door, I could hear the poor old Major, between his sobs, repeating over and over, "Oh, my little one! my little one!"

¶ The next night several of us went to the Ladies' Parlor to set up with baby. At the head of the little coffin sat the Major. He was in full evening dress—none of us had seen him in evening dress before—and in his lappel was a bouquet of white flowers, evidently arranged by himself. He looked years older; indeed, about all there was left of his old look was the patient gentleness that had won us all. In the coffin, in the little hand, was another bouquet of white flowers, as awkwardly arranged as the one the Major wore. We did not need to be told where it came from. Always shy, he was even more so that night, from the unaccustomed duty he seemed struggling to perform. As the boarders dropped in, to look at the child, he seemed glad of the opportunity to go up again and look into the coffin, but he never went by himself. He had nothing to say, but if spoken to, replied with his never-failing sweetness of manner. Often during that night he was out for water, but those of us who saw his wet lashes, knew what took him out. Towards morning a lady watcher found lying on the centre table a broken doll which had belonged to the little one and which she had named after the "Mady." The Major went out quickly and came back no more.

¶ At the funeral next day it looked to us, though the parents of the little one were there, as if the chief mourner was not, for the Major was absent. Indeed, he was not at the hotel during the day, and it was late in the evening before he came home. He still had the dress suit on, but the

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bouquet was gone. It needed no one tell us on what little mound of earth it had been left. I think I have said that the Major was not easy to be intimate with, and to that fact I ascribe none of us trying to console his grief by reference to his little love. He resumed his every day suit—he wore his full dress suit for several days, I think, as a sort of silent expression of mourning—and resumed his old seat in the corner of the veranda, where he and the little one had such gay larks and which was their headquarters when they came from walk. He was the same gentle, sweet old man, except if anything a shade gentler to all and especially to children. When I came away he walked to the depot with me, and as we walked, told me he expected always to live where—well, where he lived now. That was the nearest he ever came to speaking of what filled his heart. I can see him now, as the cars started, waving his hand and his blue eyes lighted up.

¶ And now to the letter. It is just a few days since I got it. In writing to one of my hotel acquaintances I had sent my regards to the old Major, and asked if he had kept his promise to live there always. The answer shocked me. He had not kept his promise, the writer said, but he had gone to live in a another and Better Country. His health of late had not been strong, and a few weeks ago it had become clear that he was fast going. His last walk was out to the resting place of his little love. As he grew worse and weaker he asked that the rector be sent for. When he came, the Major told him that he had long ago placed his hopes on the Heavenly Father and tried to live as a child of His, and—with his old time gentle hesitation—he added, “as a poor unworthy child of His.’ But it was not for that he had sent for him, it was this, and here the Major took from under his pillow a letter addressed to baby’s parents, which he asked the rector to deliver. It had

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been written just after her death and was a simple request that he might be buried by her side. One thing he questioned the rector anxiously about: as to whether in the Better Country we would know each other. The letter was delivered and the next day baby's father and mother came to see her old friend. He was fast going, and lay with his eyes closed. Somehow, it seemed to cross his mind that they would know, and as they were leaving, he said, "You think I'll know the little one? Oh, I hope I will know her." After he was buried, adds the writer, we found some of her broken toys in his desk, and a list, written way back in the fall, of Christmas gifts to buy for her.

¶ Has he seen her again? It cannot be that the loving Father has not taken this simple hearted of His by the hand and led him to the little one who went before. And that in this blessed Christmas time, in that far off and better land, listening to the songs of angels and gazing at the glories of a brighter world, there walk, once more, hand in hand, the Major and his Last Love.



## Observations of a Retired Veteran

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HE people are taking their vacation — an imposing three-syllable name for a very tiny slice of holiday taken off an immense lump of work. Of all the impositions that I know, this vacation business, in the way we take it, is greatest. Somehow, by some inexplicable way, it has grown into a custom with men who have business, to understand that a vacation means two weeks, fourteen days, out of three hundred and sixty-five, or one week out of every twenty-six. And then back again to work. It is like taking a poor devil out of a box once a year, and after giving him a breath of fresh air, putting him back and letting the lid down on him again. It is often said that a thing is as free as air, but to a busy man the air is anything but free. Whiskey, cigars, newspapers, the church, the theatre are at hand and easy of access, but the long, lazy, untrammelled breathing of fresh air out of town is hard to get. I never see a cart-horse enjoying his dinner out of a nose-bag that I don't think this is the way business men get their fresh air. They sniff it from the streets on the run. They haven't time to unharness and drop the cart and take a long and satisfactory meal. I say I don't know who invented the two weeks system, but I strongly suspect the doctors had a hand in it. I never hear their flippant, devil-may-care (you must see by this time that I am in an awful humor) way in which they assure you that a week or two out will "set you up all right," that I don't feel that I am getting nearer and nearer to the inventor. But what will I do with him if I get him? It will be the old story, "You didn't improve at the pink sulphur springs; why, what did you do?" Well, I lay down under the trees and had a good rest. "That's it, my boy; didn't I tell you exercise was the thing; why, that's what you went there for." And then he is astonished that Smith didn't improve at the brown sulphur; "what could he have done?" Well, he went fishing and

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hunted some. "Great Scott, man, how did you expect to improve; why, you walked off every pound you gained. Why, you went there for rest, not to walk yourself to death." And so they go. As if fourteen days could hold enough of health in them to improve anybody. Fourteen days is of no account to anybody unless, perhaps, it might be a two-weeks respite to a man to be hung, and even that would be a very temporary sort of satisfaction.

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¶ Now, that I am in a bad humor, let me touch on another grievance. I declare to you that something ought to be done about tomato cans—a law forbidding women to have or handle them. There now; don't fly off and say I am attacking the gentler sex. I am not; I am attacking the combination of the two. Take the gentler sex by themselves and they are just lovely, but when they go in partnership with tomato cans they are—well, I won't say anything rash. There is one thing, thank heaven; I can keep my temper under all circumstances. Sitting in the cars the other day, engaged wasting a whole day of my fourteen to go something over a hundred miles, the new Floral Transfer Express came in sight. It was a lady of middle age—I won't say how old, though I wouldn't have forgiven her if she had been sixteen. Her arms were full of tomato cans, containing slips of flowers, and it took the conductor and porter both to hoist her up the car steps—for like all women, she would rather be run over than let go her bundles. When she took her seat, the cans were distributed on all the seats around her, two-thirds of them exuding the water with which the flowers had been sprinkled while she was waiting at the station. I got two or three of them as a retribution, I presume, for my having kept her from falling over the stove, and for my duplicity in saying that they would not be in the way in the

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slightest. If I live I shall hereafter be a more truthful man. I was kept busy just four hours balancing them so as to keep them from being jarred from the seat by the motion of the car. But one ray illuminated the scene, and that was, when returning from the water cooler she sat down on a little nest of four of them. It looked like a judgment and I believe it was. I don't mind the deadly traps women set on window ledges, in the shape of tomato cans filled with flowers to slip down on man's head, but I do insist that railroad authorities should not allow them to bring canned flower gardens into the cars with them, and in that I have the support of every free born American citizen.

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While I was away I learned a secret that is worth a good deal of money to any young man intending marriage, and that would have been without price to me if I had known it thirty years ago — before I knew the estimable woman, who, in company, insists that I am her better-half, and in private treats me as if I were hardly a sixteenth. I learned it at sea. Just before we sailed out of a port one afternoon a couple came down to the wharf, which consisted of a very large and fine-looking young woman and very small young man, who carried himself with much meekness. Why will little men marry big women? They looked like they had not been long married. When they came on board she was the captain and he ranked about cook. When they got off, forty-eight hours after, he ranked as admiral and she ranked about a hand before the mast. When they got on board, she called him William, and he called her "Maria dear." When they got off she called him "Willie dear," and he called her plain "Maria." When they came to supper she was the man of the two — two hours after, she was laid out on the deck benches, vowing every minute that she would die. From that moment he commenced advancing in rank. He



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was not subject to seasickness. and walked the plunging deck like a bantam rooster. In a firm voice he ordered her to her state-room, where she remained till the evening of the next day. She came out a changed woman. She evidently viewed "Willie dear" as a superior being, whom the sea itself couldn't conquer, and whose attentions to her in her sickness—which I am bound to add were kind and unremitting—were such as such beings bestow in charity on mortals made of humbler stuff. She came out of her stateroom the next evening as limp as a rag, and clinging to the little bantam as if letting go would be sure death. Seasickness had completely changed the manner and carriage of the two people. I could not help wondering if the bantam saw his advantage as I saw it, and whether, now that he had her down, he would keep her down? It struck me, while looking at them, that every man, sure of his sea legs, should early in his married life, take his wife to sea. It may give him a lifetime of peaceful rest.

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¶ Still speaking of the sea ; for I am too far from shore now to turn back, we had one day of it in which was painfully illustrated the line, "Water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink." The steward, having been changed from his own ship to ours without notice, had not laid in his wines and liquors for the voyage. It was awful news when it was announced after getting out to sea, and paled many a cheek. Much to our surprise, however, all the next morning one of the passengers appeared in a state of exhilaration not to be accounted for by anything we had seen on the table. Later, he appeared still worse, and as he did not appear at dinner, we concluded that he was drinking to excess in his room. A passenger said indignantly that "the man was killing himself," and volunteered to go in and see about him. About dark, that day, the volunteer made his appearance on deck. After some uncertain

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steps he managed to seat himself on a coil of rope. Looking at us with a look of solemn philanthropy in his face, he announced thickly, that "I got t'way from 'm at last." It was very clear that he had.

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¶ Do you know that I never travel the sea that I am not pervaded by an antagonistic and contradictory frame of mind that sets itself against all the popular and religious ideas of it. The ocean impresses me with neither the majesty nor the power of God. Indeed, it does not impress me with God at all, but to the contrary, gives me a sort of undefined, painful unbelief. To me, somehow, there is no other side of the ocean. And looking out on its boundless space, covered with the blue vault lighted by millions of worlds and floating over, to me, bottomless waters, I feel so lost in space, such an infinitesimal atom, that the doctrine of the sparrow that falls seems a chimera, and a God inconceivable. I wonder if this is not so with others. I wonder if all of us do not shrink from this immensity and take refuge in our own hearts where alone we can hear the voice of God, and where, at any hour or in any scene, we can find an instant answer to all our doubts. There is but one spot on the ocean that leads me to a sort of a fanciful realization of a future life. It is that red one made by the setting sun, especially if we be off shore, and the birds are flying landward. The roseate bridge thrown across the water, swinging with the waves, the intense and silver brightness of the centre of the arc framed in the evening clouds that roll around it, and the gleaming wings of the birds, as they flash across the disc and disappear in the shining centre on their way homeward, somehow bring to my mind the gates ajar and the souls flying from earth to their final rest. There may be beautiful pictures to come after this life ; if there are, sunset at sea is as near as our mortal minds can yet come to them.

## **Observations of a Retired Veteran**

### **VI**

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## Observations of a Retired Veteran

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WELL, we have gotten you into a new year ! Life and Fate and Time, all have managed to get you here. With many of you they had a hard pull to get you here. Some of you have been near to death ; some of you so miserable you hardly wanted to try another year here, and the majority of you have shown the least interest about getting here. I don't reproach you ; you are only following the perverse example of Human Nature. Did it ever strike you that the globe and the people who live on its surface, are always marching different ways ? While all the restless tide of humanity moves to the West, the globe turns itself to the East. On its surface, Man is much like the acrobat we see at the theatres, who, mounted on his parti-colored ball, faces one way while it moves the other. It must be a queer spectacle to those who, from the planetary dress circle of the universe, are watching us through their opera glasses. It must be still queerer to them when they hear us chanting a Miserere at the approach of an invincible line across the face of Time, as imaginary as the Equator, and when it is passed, filling the air with a Jubilate—the songs of the dying and the coming year. It is rather a comfort to us that we don't believe in the dress circle of gazers ; that we have the comfortable belief that we are the only people in the Universe, and that beyond the questionable discovery of a canal across one of the planets, the wisest of astronomers have found no evidence of human life elsewhere. And so, with a Crusoe-like sense of solitude, we live on our traditions, on our religions, and on our ideas of Man to the exclusion of the rest of the Universe.

¶ With an impartial judgment, therefore, and not influenced by the approval or disapproval of this vast dress circle, in whose existence we have no faith, let us take up these imaginary lines for a moment. It is unquestionable that,

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whether for good or evil, they have descended to us by tradition and custom as a legacy. They are sufficiently real to be of practical use, and they are used. It is by them that we set a time — alas, that we should have the necessity of doing it—to discard some vice, some sin, some weakness. We use them in the interest of procrastination—that we may put off the parting day with something our conscience, or our taste, or both, disapprove. By them we appoint a time when we shall say to the divine spark within our breasts, you may flame out into our daily life. By them we give a respite which alas, often ends in a commutation of sentence and oftener still in a full pardon and restoration to peace.

¶ So, you see, I do not think a great deal of old year remorse or New Year resolutions. I think they are just that much better than none at all, and this has to be qualified by the damage they do in having us put off reformation. That a man should fix a day to reform in this or that particular, is at least an evidence that he is aware of his need of it—a great point gained. These years are but little stepping-stones across the narrow brook of Time that pours into the vast ocean of Eternity, and it is a good sign when a man approaches the next, and the next, and the next with increasing reverence and sense of the responsibility of his progress. It is a good sign when a man begins to discover in the impediments of life, what is necessary and what is absolutely hurtful to him in the journey of life, and when, with the discovery, he summons up enough resolution to fix a day to throw away the bad. It is hard for the best of us to get our load rightly picked over. When we have failed to start right in youth, it is unspeakably hard after getting out into the dust and glare of the world to assort our burden over, and drop what ill elements we have gathered on the road. That a man should fix a time to do this is itself a good

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thing and just that far these imaginary lines are good.

¶ But something far better, far manlier, is to have the firmness to draw our own lines at our own times. It is so peculiarly a personal matter that we can well afford to let the World have its lines and we have our own. If you agree with me, then your own line is drawn at To-day and Every Day. If a man cannot enter on a new life every day, he can unquestionably enter on at least a newer life every day. It must be a barren and unfruitful mind to which something—good or evil—is not added every day, to make it that much newer. You know this yourself. You have seen healthy, pure-minded boys start out in life and you have met them later with minds so darned with vice here, and patched with sin there, that you hardly recognized them. That transformation was not done in a day. You have seen boys that you knew at school without a bad habit, and when you met them again they had added to their lives drinking, gambling, everything this side of a police court. That was not done in a day. We do nothing in a day—not even reform in a day. All good and evil is a matter of ascent and descent—the latter only the faster because the grade is easier. It is not an easy experiment in the world to be a good man. No man ever fixed a day to become a good one. It is an uphill road, a long road, and one who proposes to walk it must fix no later hour than now lest night-fall find him far from the end of it.

¶ But the young man who determines to walk it in this day, has a far easier road than he would have had thirty years ago. It is the fashion to say that the road grows no better. It is not true; the world's opinion grows better every day. There were many things respectable thirty years ago that are absolutely disreputable now. Then, a middle-aged man might drink at a bar with a boy of twenty. If he did it to-day he would be

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marked at once. Then, drinking and gambling were looked upon as the wild oats a young man might sow, without losing caste. To-day, the young man who drinks and gambles is looked upon as of doubtful social position, by both men and women. To-day, in making their lists of invitations, leaders in society cross out the names of dissipated young men as promptly as they do those of fast young women. Whereas thirty years ago there was rather a mantle of sentimental charity fitted on the shoulders of a disreputable young fellow, to-day he is roughly talked of as a "drunkard" or a "common fellow"; terms that no one dreamed of applying to him then. There has been nothing that public opinion, especially that section of it that may be called social opinion, has changed in more than in the standard it fixes for, and demands from, all men, and particularly young men. The result is that when a man wants to be superior to vice now, he has the moral weight of a sounder public opinion and finds the road easier than he would have had thirty years ago.

¶ I have said nothing to you about any higher inducement to commence a better life every day, than those you can find in the world. They are quite sufficient, or ought to be. A healthy body, a clear mind, success in the world—these are the rewards which a good life offers here. There is just one other word about what it offers elsewhere. I am not a preacher, you need not be afraid of a sermon. I am just one of yourselves; only I have come over a longer road than you have, and have seen more of its pitfalls as well as more of its sign-boards. Nor do I pretend to know more than you of what it offers elsewhere. But I just wish to say one word to recall what you already know; what you must know. There is nothing that we all know better—nothing that is more surely planted in the human mind than that this is only a part of our life; that when we shall reach a future existence, we shall there

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find a life awaiting us which will match with the piece we carry from this one. It is a very grave thought — graver than any which we shall consider on earth, if we are intelligent men — which the match will be — whether it will be found in one of infinite misery or one of infinite betterment. Here we have the power to say which it shall be. It is a priceless power. Let us use it, not in fixing days for reformation, not in lamenting over promises of reforms broken, and fixing other days to come; but in living a newer life every day. As we can make no bargain nor compromise about the time and place where our life shall end, let us take the matter into our own hands and so live that it will matter little when or where the end comes. So live that when the summons come,

“Thou go not, like the quarry slave at night  
Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed  
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave  
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch  
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.”





**Observations of a Retired Veteran**  
**VII**

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## Observations of a Retired Veteran

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**I**SOMETIMES come to the conclusion that it is in Winter that a Philosopher has his several trials. That is, of course, a married Philosopher. For of the other sort I take no account, seeing that with their mode of life they have little need of Philosophy, unless, indeed, it be esteemed so lowly a remedy as to be put at the beck and call of men for evils they invite to themselves. Philosophy I hold to be a Patent Medicine of the higher sort, which is to be taken only for those afflictions brought us by others, and by which we are enabled to assuage our own misery through inspecting from an elevated plane the folly, or extravagance, or weakness of those who have afflicted us. It is a mental jack-screw by which we wind ourselves up to a height from which we can look down on lacks in others. To lose sight of our own pain after shooting down a flight of steps, in grave pitying contemplation of the stupidity of the chambermaid who left the bar of soap on the first step—that is your true Philosophy. And the man who forgets to rub his back, through pitying her ignorance, is the true philosopher. It is a quality from the gods, and whether exhibited over the minor calamity of soap, or the graver distress to which the married Philosopher too often falls heir, shows its origin in a heavenly calm. To him, I think I have said, this calm has its severe trial in the winter; but now that I think of it again, if I were writing this in the summer, I should say that season was the severest. Indeed, thinking of it still further, I am puzzled to decide on any season that does not bring to him the severest trials of his heavenly serenity. The other night Mrs. Boyzy, as she slipped one of the little stockings off the wooden ball, which has served our children for so many years and so many purposes—from filling out a croquet set, to the braining of their parents—her kindly, and to me still beautiful face, lighting up with a smile, said: “We are having a real gay

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winter in Staunton, dear." Alas, I knew it well. Between High Teas and Blue Teas, and Ladies' Lunches and Bands of Twenties, I knew it well. I knew it from the number of times that I have had to steal in like a thief in the night, at my own side gate and make my way into a cold set-out in the nursery, while a High Tea was progressing down stairs accompanied by the hum of feminine voices. I knew it from the cold nights I have had to carry our eldest daughter to her club, with the dreary reflection that it was to be still colder later, when young Jones or young Tompkins would have to bring her home; and when Mrs. Boyzy would wake me from my slumber and in dressing gown and slippers I would shiver behind the front door till young Jones and she, after much low murmuring, would separate, and the light of the family would consent to come inside. I knew it. I always know it, being a victim of dyspepsia — from the bon-bons and other gim-cracks which are served out at my family table after these lunches and teas, and which are persistently served out until, as my wife calls it, they are "finished." Had I not that very evening had served to me a piece of fruit-cake made, I believe, when our eldest girl was in short dresses! I knew it from the short party calls which have rattled like bird-shot against the Boyzy mansion, to the utter wreck of my quiet evenings with Mrs. Boyzy — a woman that I had much rather talk to than all the callers in the world. And all this that I knew so well, was put by that estimable woman under the head of a "real gay winter." Before I could apply the elevating mental jack-screw that raises me above all earthly troubles, I could not help feeling that the inquiry was pretty much like asking a scrambling lobster boiling in the pot, if he was not having a real gay evening? I am afraid I mentioned some such impression to my wife, for I was soon astonished by finding that I was instrumental in the whole business.

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"But, my dear," she replied, "we have to do it. Every one does it." We! I was astonished to find that instead of being a victim I had been an accessory, perhaps the chief criminal, in bringing it about. A few questions from the ever-ready partner of my joys soon convinced me that if I had not been a great criminal, it was only through lack of time and opportunity. Did I have any idea of what was due to the position of my family in society? What would become of our children's "prospects"? What sort of life would my family lead—and here the severe inflection of her voice convinced my crime-stricken conscience that nothing but a miracle—and Mrs. Boyzy—could have saved my family from utter social destruction if I had been allowed to have my way. Happily, by this time, Philosophy had come to my aid, and looking through its beautifying and mellowing mist, all was changed. The teas and the lunches and the clubs appeared in the brightest tints; the shivering waits behind the front door changed into evening strolls into tropical gardens; the gray sprinkled hair of my wife changed into the sunny auburn of her youth, and she once more stood in the little church of our old home listening to the words, "For better or for worse." Happy the married Philosopher who wears around his neck with an even temper and an understanding mind, this talisman of happiness devised by far-seeing men of other days—"For better or for worse." Man cannot harm him nor Womankind disappoint him.

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¶ I have been sitting up by the bedside of a dying Adjective. It was not through pity that I sat there, but through hate. For I detest an Adjective. It is the father of lies, the author of affectation and the progenitor of all exaggeration. They should be remitted to limbo with all the other crudities of youth. I have listened to the

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point of exasperation, through an evening, to the absurd use of adjectives by young girls of education and with some claims to good taste. Somehow it sometimes comes to me, that this use of adjectives is the besetting sin of the female conversationalists of this day. Some young fellows unsex themselves so far as to follow the bad example, but the majority of that sex substitute oaths for adjectives, which is a social habit on too low a plane for criticism here. But on all sides in the social conversation of the young people of this day, it seems to be agreed to give good, plain, strong English the go-by and to indulge in the embroidery of adjectives. Tawdry adjectives such as 'beautiful', 'lovely', 'horrid', 'awful', and the like worn tinsel. I suppose I might venture the assertion without fear of contradiction, that this is the stock in trade in most young girls in qualifying their conversation. The use of that tinsel gives a wholly unreal tone to what is being said and is so pregnant with affectation as to be tiresome. Between slang and adjectives, it is hard to choose, both are so detestable from a woman's lips. The difference is that the adjective insidiously captures the refined mind, while slang only holds captive the coarse mind. In a plain and intended to be truthful statement of any occurrence, the injection of three or four adjectives will change the whole tenor of narration, and give it a vraisemblance of untruth which it is hard for the hearer's mind to erase. As a matter of fact, an adjective ought to be a thought, not a word. A fact should be stated without embroidery, and we should think whether it is beautiful, lovely, and the like. There are many thoughts in the human mind that are not translatable into words. They may have been in some other language long gone, but they are not so in ours. As those words have gone into oblivion, so should the majority of our English adjectives follow them.

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## Observations of a Retired Veteran

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I have forgotten to tell the patient I have been sitting up with. It is the adjective 'tasty.' Years ago Mrs. Boyzy set her foot down on this word, and as in duty bound, I also set my foot down. Whether our two feet have stamped the unhappy adjective out, or from some other cause that I know not of, its end has certainly come. As in all fierce popular outbreaks against long existing oppression, the weakest and most insignificant of the oppressors are often the first to fall, so this unexaggerative, unaggressive, ill-sounding little adjective is the first to die. Let us hope that an early day be appointed unto the others to follow it.



¶ Have you ever watched a man going down? It is an interesting study, and a unique one, for the reason that no other animal has language by which to express the various stages at which he arrives before dropping out of the Procession of Life. Nor has any animal so many contrivances with which to dodge and play at hide and seek with Death. The earthly affection which abides in man, seems to overmaster all the other emotions—faith, hope, everything,—and he who firmly believes in a future existence is found as frantic in his efforts to delay its coming, as the veriest agnostic. Then faith seems to be a theological treasure of this earth, rather than a treasure of the future. The man with no tie to bind his soul to this planet is as reluctant to leave it as he who has the strongest ties of friendship, love and fatherhood. All mankind seem to have that dread of it which their children have of being put in a dark closet. But I am not going to investigate the mysterious dread of death, or the even more mysterious attachment to life. I am merely recalling to my memory men whom I have seen stagger awhile and then fall out of the line of life. There is no

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## Observations of a Retired Veteran

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more pathetic sight to me, than a man when he first finds that he is falling. Like a child, he cannot understand it. This strange feeling that he has never had before; that pain that must come from this or that—they are all so new to him. He cannot realize that he is failing, and least of all can he realize the dread truth that it is time for him to fail. To a man's own mind he is always at that mythical stage, his "prime," as long as health lasts. It is piteous to hear his excuses for his failing body—it was this imprudence, it was that cold, it was too much or too little exercise—he cannot understand that it is the herald of the Messenger, and that a little way off through the mist he might see the Messenger himself holding the Lotus flower in his hand. It is more piteous still to see him, like a captured animal, seeking some way of escape through the bars. He must get a horse—it is only exercise he wants; he must have a longer vacation—it is only rest he wants; he must have more society—it is only recreation he needs; he must have less society—it is only quiet he requires. His blindness is inexplicable. He will walk in a garden and point out to you a tree that cannot last longer than such a time; he will point to a worn-out beast of burden that must die at such a time; he knows the death date of everything that springs from earth except himself. In his blind hope he grasps at the worst of straws. No new universal panacea comes out that he does not seize on it, and that he is not sure, for a little while is doing him good. At last he weakens in the struggle and is taken to the rear. The procession of Life moves on; he never joins it again. If all this had happened to only one man, the World would be in tears. As it happens to all men, the World hardly gives it a thought. But to him, that One Man is all the world, and it is hard to get his thoughts away from himself. As the Procession of Life

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## **Observations of a Retired Veteran**

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passes on, and the hum of its marching columns grows fainter on his ears, let us hope that there may come to him that unworldly quiet that Death pityingly sends in advance, and amid which Hope steals noiselessly away from the bedside to make room for Faith. And in which he may take the pale flower from the hand of the Messenger, and following him through the dawn of a new birth, see another Hand, holding out to him the purple amaranth of Eternal Life.





## **Observations of a Retired Veteran**

### **VIII**

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## Observations of a Retired Veteran

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**R**EST! Ah, what a delicious word to the sick and wearied man. Rest in mind and body! How unsatisfactory appear the gaudy pictures of the dreamer of Patmos compared with the simple words of the Master, "I will give you rest." I can hardly say why I selected Hampton for rest. I knew nobody here, and had never been here. But somehow I had taken up the impression that it was one of those old East Virginia towns that had been blown ashore by the tempest of civil war and lay stranded on the beach of the briny ocean of life. And that was the sort of place that quiet was to be found in. My first night was a happy confirmation of my choice. Standing on the wharf at which lay a little steamer, the scene was beautiful. The new moon hung in the west and cast its glittering line over the water for miles and miles away. Thick in the little harbor lay the slender masts of vessels with steady lights glowing in their rigging. Across the narrow bay stood the Normal School with its three stories brightly lighted, and further away was the gigantic Soldiers' Home with a thousand lights burning. To the east was the long bridge across Hampton creek, with every few minutes a lighted omnibus or a pair of carriage lamps going leisurely across. Further yet was a railroad train lighted and flying across the trestle bridge. At the opening of the little bay were fisher boats, coming in with all sail spread, the loud laughter and chaffing of the men easily heard at this distance. Turning inland, you see a broad street, with shade trees on each side casting dark shadows. The lights twinkle its whole length and at one point there is a bright spot—a pretty, white hotel with a treble deck of verandahs. That is my home for many days to come and there I am to be at rest. The call of the bugle sounds on the night air; it is the "taps" at the Soldiers' Home; the salt water is beating with lazy monotone against the

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## Observations of a Retired Veteran

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shore; the fisherman have tied up their boats; the last omnibus has crossed the bridge; the young moon is getting to her bed and I turn my face toward the long street and the bright hotel. A man of high-toned and poetic mind would here insert something about his thoughts turning to his mountain home. Alas! mine are turned with eager curiosity to what my breakfast tomorrow would be, reflecting as I do that I am now in the land, or rather water, of oysters, soft crabs and fish. After all, of what common clay we are made!

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¶ The redeeming feature of ill-health, to me, has been that for the last few months I have been thrown with many invalids and enjoyed their confidence to the fullest, (and sometimes the most, to some extent). There seems to be a sort of free-masonry among sick people by which they at once become friendly and familiar. There is, also, if you only knew it, an aristocracy of ill-health; that is, a man with two complaints stands much higher with his fellow invalids than a man with one; and a man who has been sick for five years stands immeasurably higher than a mere cadet who has not been sick six months. Having only a two years' standing, I was forced to bear the contempt which I received from chronic cases, but I repaid it with interest on some evidently shoddy invalids, who were trying to work their way into society on an attack of only a few weeks duration. I remember one case, however, in which our whole aristocratic circle was swept into insignificance by a little lady, whom I saw after I left Hampton, and who didn't weigh ninety pounds. She had been an invalid, she said, for fifteen years, and while I do not recollect precisely her afflictions, it appears to me that she had had chronic trichnia spiralis for that length of time, with intermittent cerebro spinal meningitis tending towards hydrophobia.

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This imposing patient cowed the whole invalid circle. But one man showed the slightest resistance, and that was old man Smith, who had been very proud of his chronic liver complaint. He told me in confidence the next day that he believed "the whole story was a — — —." It is due to the company, however, to say that the narration was received with polite expressions of sympathy and wonder, while there was at the same time a silent conviction that it was of this complication of diseases that Ananias died. If a lady could rout us, however, it was not permitted to a man. When another of these aristocratic invalids, one of those "four giant shows under one canvas," came along, varying in sex from the first mentioned, he was speedily brought to grief. At supper, the first evening of his arrival, one of our circle having asked him with incautious politeness "how he was?" the new arrival opened on us with a sonorous discourse filled with chronic afflictions mixed up with pious reflections. I think he would have established his claims to high rank had not a consumptive-looking boarder with a haggard face taken advantage of a pause in the speech, and without looking up from his plate, remarked in a squeaky voice, "The remainder of the service will be concluded at the grave." The interruption was a bombshell. I have said that there is a free-masonry among invalids; I might add that it almost amounts to the old co-operation plan. I have been offered advice without limit and even medicine from my fellow sufferers. I have also been furnished with a list of their own attending physicians, all of whom have performed remarkable cures. It is a full and complete list of fifty-eight physicians in good professional standing, and I will dispose of it at a moderate compensation to any apothecary or undertaker who desires to purchase.

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## Observations of a Retired Veteran

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¶ Where was I? Oh, speaking of invalids! Sickness is to be dreaded with many because of death, but from the high moral plane from which I regard it, it is chiefly objectionable on account of the lying it gives rise to. Directly a man gets well on the way down hill, the good natured world gets this lie photographed, and each man presents him a copy—"Why, I never saw you looking better in my life!" For the first few copies that are presented him the poor devil is grateful; of the next few he is suspicious, and thereafter he is worried, vexed and profane. If you remonstrate against the truth of the assurance and call attention to the prominent skeleton which you are presenting to the public eye, the good natured liar looks you unflinchingly in the eye while he presents you with another lithograph bearing this inscription: "Oh, I didn't mean that you were fatter, I meant that your skin is clearer and your eyes are brighter." Not having a sample of your former skin, nor another pair of eyes handy to confute him with, this well-meaning liar walks off triumphantly. I, myself, however, am no better than the rest of them, though my presenting the lithograph cost me dearly one day. In one of the towns where I stopped, a young girl came to the hotel the shadow of what she had been. I suppose one evening I must have felt unusually chipper and kindly myself, for, coming up on the porch where she was sitting, I dashed off the old lithograph, "Why you are looking so much better." Her eyes—I never saw eyes that had so much of the other world and so little of this in them—turned on me with a half kind, half reproachful look, and at once filled with tears. She merely said gently, "Thank you," and got up and walked away. God forgive me, that I should have interrupted a soul so near to setting sail, to pay a lithographed and lying compliment. Three weeks later, in another town, I was told that she had gone on the last long voyage. I have burned my lithographs.



**Observations of a Retired Veteran**  
**IX**

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## Observations of a Retired Veteran

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**A**T Afton in the Blue Ridge Mountains. There now, sit still, I am not going to commence about "lifting their eternal heads;" indeed I am not. Did it ever strike you, though, how different a man talks when he gets a pen in his hand; how impossible it is for a man to keep his feet on the ground and use a reasonably plain English without absurd adjectives, when he is writing descriptions of scenery. It is a miserable piece of affectation, you know; and they know you know, but they do it all the same. It comes, I presume, from a desire to assert the possession of imagination. The vulgar name for it is "flowery" and I am not certain that it is not a good name, for the chief business of flowers is to please the senses. You will find it popular with three classes of orators — commencement orators, political orators, and pulpit orators. The first use it because they know no better; the second, from the belief that it will catch those who know no better; and third because they find that a bright coat of paint to a religious sign post is particularly attractive to the female members of the congregation. With the first class, it is ignorance; with the second, business, and with the third, a mild, but well defined form of insincerity. You will find, too, that, with few exceptions, flowery ministers are — little else. I do not mean a forcibly drawn picture; that is a wholly different thing; I mean gaudy, flowery word painting. I remember at Trinity church in Staunton once, a description by a minister named Tucker, of a sacrifice made by the Jews at Jerusalem. Do you know, though that was years ago, I can see to-day the scene the man drew standing out in memory. It was powerful, but there was not a particle of prismatic coloring about it. It was a bas-relief cut on granite — full of power, enduring, and with a touch of eternity about it. Such picture-drawing is not flowery and does not wither.



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## Observations of a Retired Veteran

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¶ I know that the popular subjects of interest in the mountains are sunrise and sunset, but for something really worth writing about, and much more rare, give me a fog spread out at the feet like a white carpet. Ah! that is something worth seeing. The valley, a mile below, is hidden in the gauzy sea, and the tops of mountain spurs here and there peep out like little islands. The white, silent sea is spread for miles and miles. Underneath it is life — an invisible wagon rumbles, a horse neighs, a man calls to his neighbor, but the surface is calm, still, level. You would not be surprised to see a steamer come puffing from behind one of the islands. The wind presses the sea into billows which shift to and fro as water would. Away down on a wagon road you hear the tinkling of bells and a flock of sheep emerge from a rift in the mist and turning disappear in another cloud of it. The fog parts again and a white top wagon, with four horses, is seen toiling slowly along. The driver cracks his whip and the sea of mist slowly rolls over him again. Another shifting, and a little farmhouse appears, with a man riding from under the trees. He rides into the mist and the farmhouse disappears. A railroad train rushes out of a bank of white wool and into another, in complete silence. The white sea gets uneasy under the wind, and the sun begins to brighten up the clouds above. Then the woolen surface begins to move; a mountain spur makes its appearance clear against the sky; the farm houses silently glide from under the sea; a flock of sheep, whose shepherd dog's bark you have heard from under the mist, is revealed. The sea is fast being blown away. The sun comes out. The whole landscape is changed and the great billows of mist that have covered it are now thin strips of white cloud driven across the blue sky. Once more you see spread out at your feet the valley, checkered with farms and orchards, and dotted with farmhouses shining in the sun. The

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## Observations of a Retired Veteran

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miracle of nature is over. Let the enthusiasts have their sunrise and sunset; lovers their moonlight; but as for me, give me a mountain fog.

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¶ I suppose you don't know Maria? You ought to. She was a great comfort to me while I was at Hampton. Did I love her? Ah, most truly! I have sat on the hotel porch and watched Maria in her front yard by the hour. I suppose if I were to meet her to-day she would hardly recollect my name, so inconsistent is her sex, but I left my heart with her. It is true that she was not conventional, that her skirts hardly came to her knees; that she could not write, and that her general air was not that of a society woman, but to a sick man she was an inexpressible comfort. I have written her name Maria, but she was also called Mar-i-a, Mari-a-a-a, Mari-uh, and oh-h-h, M-a-r-i-a. These names she was called from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof. I don't think I have ever known a more versatile genius than Maria. At times she was a steamboat, with loud blowing of the whistle; at other times she was a bear and devoured other children with grunts and growls of great ferocity; at other times, she was a horse of such high mettle and spirit as could only find vent in chewing up the front gate and pawing her mother's geraniums into the earth. But it was in her great and realistic combat with dogs that I admired Maria most. Every day about noon two setter dogs would come lounging about the yard with the most innocent air in the world. It was Maria's lunch time and the little thing would toddle in and bring out her lunch. No sooner would she appear than the dogs would rush on her and roll her in the dirt. There was a brief scuffle, an agonizing scream, the dirt flew, the dogs rushed off, and Maria sat up in tears, dirt and hunger. The lunch was gone. By the time quiet was restored, the dogs would come to

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see if they had left any in their hurry, and the forgiving little one would start in to play with them as if nothing had happened. I was there two months, and if Maria got a whole lunch in that time, I didn't see it. Sometimes the dogs had forgotten to look at their watches and would be a couple of minutes behind time, but all the same they rushed on her and took what there was. Often the screams would bring her mother out, and Maria would go into a little explanation which, as she couldn't talk, didn't make things very clear, consisting chiefly of "a-h-s" and "o-h-s." Little as she was, she had a spice of shrewdness which unfortunately didn't work well. She would commence her scream directly she brought her lunch out, but as soon as she found it only served to make the dogs more promptly on time, she gave it up. I have had a good deal of amusement, one way or another, but Maria stands at the head of the list in my memory.



¶ I made the acquaintance of a married couple at Afton. I do not often hold up the private life of my acquaintances to illustrate moral reason, but I must make this an exception. I believe the gentleman was brought to Afton for the protection of sheep, and to test the statement that a goat with a flock of sheep would keep off the dogs. When I saw him he was a moral wreck. He had become a professional loungeur around the depot where he chewed up old paper, straw, and such odd crumbs of lunch as the passengers would throw out of the car windows. His hair was full of burrs and he had gotten one of his legs broken by the cars. His occupation was to wrestle with all the trifling fellows, white and black, around the depot, butt them when he could, and be ridden by them when he couldn't. He had long since lost his situation at the sheep fold, having proved rather an attraction to dogs,

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## Observations of a Retired Veteran

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who are fond of low company, than a protection to sheep. Untidy, thriftless, a loafer, kicked and cuffed about by the public and half starved, he presented a pitiable contrast to his wife, neat little lady, who, after her husband had lost his situation, left him and joined a respectable circle of cows and spent her time with them, fat, sleek, eminently respectable, and as regular as clock-work in taking them out to pasture and bringing them home. The moral point that I wish to make is this—if you give a woman half a chance she will be a lady; if you give a man half a chance he will go to the dogs. It is in the sex of the animal.



¶ I often hear it said of a man that he has "the manners of the old school," by which is meant courteous, deferential manners. I don't know that any particular "school," old or new, will give a man good manners, but it is certainly true that age does ripen and mellow those of both men and women. As we grow older we become aware that there are a great many other people besides ourselves in the world, and that if we want to go through it smoothly we must keep to the right and not insist on keeping our elbows akimbo in a crowd. A rude young man may reform, but a rude old man may be regarded as having been illy bred early in life, and hopeless. Good manners are very like the catechism lessons our mothers teach us when children. They don't count for a great deal at the time, but the result comes up in life a long, long time afterwards. I think I can tell you of the "old school" where really good manners originated. The Teacher has long since gone, and sometimes I have fear the old school itself has changed, but He left the rule with us when He departed, and here it is: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." After the Teacher left, many new doctrines were brought about, and much chop-logic

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## Observations of a Retired Veteran

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was put into the text-books by those who succeeded Him, but with all their human invention they have never approached the perfection of the motto that He left behind for the corner-stone of good manners. It is that, I think, that makes old men have better manners; they have learned that there is a good deal more in the people of the world to appeal to their affection and kindly toleration than they thought for at the beginning of their lives; that there is a great deal of good in every man and woman, and that it won't do to pick out their faults to the exclusion of their virtues; that a touch of kindly courtesy will often reveal to you a wholly different man from the surly one who stood before you a minute before; in short, our old man has learned more and more the lesson to love his neighbor as himself. That is the true "old school" founded eighteen hundred years ago.



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## **Observations of a Retired Veteran**

### **X**

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## Observations of a Retired Veteran

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**T**HE procession of two regiments of veterans through our streets a few days ago must have set a good many of us retired veterans who were not in the line, to thinking. It did me. It set me to thinking, not of war, not of peace, not of reunions, but of how time has changed us all in twenty years. In a neighboring city where I volunteered, the old company, with the old name and the old uniform, is still kept up by our young successors. I saw it lately on parade, and as I saw the trim looking young fellows of from nineteen to twenty-five, clad in the same bright uniform of twenty years ago, and stepping out with all the brisk and cheery step of youth, it looked as if there had been a resurrection of the old days. Could we old gray heads ever have looked like these! Could that gay young spark mounted on the leading caisson horse and furtively chaffing No. 13 be Hilleary and Hutchins come to life again? Could that serious, slender boy, all attention to the word of command, be the grave and clerical Hale Houston of this day gone back to youth again. Can that sturdy No. 4 at the gun, be old Boss Lumpkin? Could we all have looked as fresh and full of youth, and as full of engaging humor and good temper as these young fellows? I suppose we did, though it is hard to be believed, even by ourselves. I can tell you of a reunion that, if promised, would bring more of the old boys together than all the patriotism than can ever fill the American heart. Just promise them that for that day they shall be young again! Bless my heart, what a crowd you could have! Young again, mark you, both in mind and body. I don't know one of the old fellows who, if he had the option, wouldn't take back the youth he had twenty-three years ago with the war, famine and hardships that followed. What a deal of difference it does make to a man whether the world is behind or in front of him.



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## Observations of a Retired Veteran

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¶ Do you know — of course this is confidential — that I am glad the schools have gone for the summer. Education has been a thorn in our family for some time past, indeed since the younger member got into the higher branches. Until lately it has been the impression of Mrs. Boyzy and myself that we spoke the English language with facility and much correctness, and as for facility I will put Mrs. B. against any picked nine that may be brought. But recently we have been greatly humiliated by our eldest girl, who comes back daily from school with a new pronunciation. Incredulity on our part is met by lugging the dictionary into the conflict and we are defeated at once. So victorious has the little one become that we tremble when we hear, "Mamma, how do you pronounce so and so," and prepare for another humiliation. My wife's plaintive, "It was pronounced so when I was a girl," is very touching to me, but when did the young ever have mercy on the old? The last conflict had — I hope it will be the last — was over the word "Squalor." The young one, after setting the usual trap of demanding how we pronounced it, announced that it was spoken "squaylor." At this my wife, astonished into resistance, made her last flight, and said with much dignity, that that pronunciation was silly and there must be a mistake. In a moment more she was prostrated by the well directed dictionary. In the evening after the children had gone upstairs, Mrs. B. locked up her sewing and remarked that a good deal of what is taught children in these days is nonsense. I did not reply. Had I, I should have been forced to remind her that she and I put our parents through the same mill in which the educational gods are now grinding us so sharply. I take it that pronunciation, I mean that of ordinary refinement and education, varies pretty much as bonnets do in style and, like them, is a matter that taste has a good deal to do with; and locality as well.

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## Observations of a Retired Veteran

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Forty years ago in the jungles of East Virginia I spoke glahss, fahst, ahnsr; I never heard of papa and mamma, but of father and mother, and I find they are teaching the children of this day to say that, too. I was taught to say g-yarden, c-yar, s-yuit, and, I suppose, that will also be resurrected after a while. Pronunciation, I take it, is a matter of provincial taste. Reading Chaucer, I have often wondered what standard of that sparsely educated day fixed the standard by which he could be read aloud. And by the bye who, of this more cultivated day, is authority for fixing the standard? Not the Dictionaries, for they differ. I dare say that after all we must fall back on taste. In the national metropolis of America, I have noticed a half-dozen different pronunciations among educated people, so distinct as to be readily noticed. But the best opportunity to be had is in an army gathered from all quarters of the country, or even from all quarters of a section, as the Confederate army was. I noticed a dozen different pronunciations, the two from North Carolina and Georgia being the most distinctly marked. I have heard it said hastily, that all educated people pronounce alike, but I think, with more deliberation and more opportunity for judging, it would be safer to say that all uneducated people pronounce alike.

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¶ I am not one of the old men who take delight in "lecturing" the young. I hate the very word, for I shall never travel far enough from my youth to forget how I disliked both the lecture and the lecturer. But sometimes I have an indescribable yearning to go and say a word to them. I feel pretty much like one who, having found a circus to be of no account and leaving the performance, finds another man at the ticket-wagon eagerly putting down his money for a ticket. It looks like a pity and I want to tell him so. I was a lot of nice-looking young fellows the other day—I

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## Observations of a Retired Veteran

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was told they were boys from one of the Universities,—standing on a corner badly flushed with liquor and swearing at a high rate. They were evidently out for “a time.” I should have liked to say something like this: “Now, boys, just let this thing drop there. Really, there is nothing in it. No young man with a sound body can need liquor, and no one with a sound reason can need the excitement of cards. We old fellows have been all along there, and there is nothing in it. I am the chief secretary of the Ancient Order of Old Boys, and my opportunities of acquiring knowledge have been exceptional. I don’t wish to hold up any raw head and bloody bones of premature death and disgrace, and all that sort of thing, but I would like to say this much to you: If you want to take a drink, take it and go about your business, but don’t associate together for the purpose of drinking, whether for a night or for an hour. You will read, before the long life that is before you ends, a hundred ways of accounting for drunkards—heredity, inclination, regular drinking, grief, disappointed love, and all that sort of thing, but all put together they do not begin to approximate the cause I tell you of,—“associating together.” It is the associating together of boys, the late nights, the early morning drinks, taken more frequently later on, and lastly the appetite. It is the associating together for the purpose of drinking that causes that selavage of bad company to adhere to the good company you started out with earlier in the evening, and it is the selavage of low company that will give every self-respecting man a good deal of disagreeable reflection when he comes to look back at it. Don’t buy that sort of a ticket, my boy; the show won’t pay you.

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## Observations of a Retired Veteran

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¶ Speaking of veterans reminds me of something I would like to say right here. Do you know there is nothing more awkward to a man—that is nothing more awkward to me, and like all egotists I judge all by myself—than meeting a familiar friend whom I have not seen for twenty years. We expect each other to be the old heart-to-heart friends of long ago, but how to go about re-establishing the relation is the puzzle. We have all had new friends, new histories, new lives since twenty years ago, and while we make an unsatisfactory attempt to be the same “old boys” to each other, each feels the dismal failure. Memory is faithful, but while we remember with affection that we were Tom and Dick to each other then (twenty years ago) we cannot, out of that slender material, build up a hearty fraternal conversation of to-day. And with advancing years we find that the old subjects that we spent hours of mirth over, a life-time ago, are not amusing to-day, if indeed our defective memories can recall them. Ah! how little it took to furnish youth with mirth, that common standing ground upon which all so easily form acquaintance and friendship. I trust I may be forgiven, seeing that I meant well, but I declare to you that I have practiced outrageous deceit in affecting to remember incidents that some of these old boys recall, and in trying to be agreeable by so doing. But doubtless you have also. Perhaps we all have. After all I take it that separation, like time, tries everything—love, friendship, even acquaintance, and those of the three which survive the test are like the ruins of ancient cities, of great value as curiosities, but worth little for aught else. Mrs. Boyzy remarks that this is a heartless view of it. But I silence that estimable woman by the observation that philosophers do not take the heart into account; the heart is the field of young lovers, physicians’ fees and patent medicines. This observation

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which she does not understand, and, I may admit to you I am not so clear about myself, convinces her that I am not only a philosopher, but a profound one. Ah! to a man of profound observation, how many better ways of securing the respect of the female sex there are than the primitive one of clubbing them.





**Observations of a Retired Veteran**  
**XI**

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## Observations of a Retired Veteran

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**I** DO not reverence ministers of the gospel simply because they hold that office, any more than I esteem a man as a gentleman simply because he has the manners and dress of one. The bare fact that at some period in his life, oftenest the period of youth, when the mind teems with odd fancies and ambitions, a man has concluded that he is called to the ministry, has successfully gotten through theology and been ordained, forms too uncertain a foundation on which to base reverence, which is one of the most solemn emotions of the mind. But I do respect and reverence the credentials of an earnest, God-fearing and self-sacrificing life which are found with these men, and I am obliged in excusing this weakness, to say that in a long and varied experience with them, these traits have been characteristic of those I have met. But it is not my lack of reverence that I intended to write about, it is the contradictory way in which those who are under their charge view this matter. The practical, effective and active irreverence of professing Christians astonishes as much as it puzzles me. They believe, or assume to believe, in the sacredness of the ministry and in the reverence due ministers as such; how do they show it? It seems to me that the architectural custom of elevating the pulpit above the heads of the people arose out of the congregational custom of shooting at the preacher. You may tell me what you please about the world's people, but it is the well-directed volley from the communicants' pews, generally fired from ambush, that does the business for the preacher's influence. Did you ever think of the marked absurdity in the contrast? The subject of calling a preacher is prefaced by prayer; the Almighty is invoked to send a man of His choice; the man is installed with impressive ceremony and much prayer; he is introduced by other ministers at the installation with allusions to him as the under shepherd to whom is



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to be rendered obedience and reverence. The new man then goes heartily to work for God, and the congregation goes heartily to work on him. They criticise his style, peck at every imperfection, intellectual and social, and soon put him in a state of siege. If the Almighty, who it was at first claimed sent him, delivers him, he is in luck; but the usual end is that the congregation itself effects his deliverance by giving him the same warm experience that the terrapin undergoes when it is desired to see him walk. After a persistent ham-stringing of the ministerial horse, the congregation are astonished that he cannot pull his load. I am a business man, and in many years have had many men in my employment, but nothing would have more astonished me at any time in my business life than to be told that I was systematically impairing and obstructing the usefulness of the men that I was paying to work for me and from whose labor I expected some profit. It is the most inexplicable inconsistency to me in congregations, which generally include a large percentage of business men. I have used the word systematically, because it seems to me that it is a system which prevades to a greater or less extent all congregations of all denominations, and is confined exclusively to no one. Nor is it the worst element in a congregation that is guilty of it; I am sorry to say that it is prevalent among even the best members. Even that excellent woman, Mrs. Boyzy, whose mind is often tortured by the apprehension that absence from church service will seriously affect my future prospects, often regales me after church with keen criticism of the sermon and the weak points of our preacher. And yet that estimable woman, on hearing our eldest daughter indulge last Sunday in a similar strain, warned her against the wickedness of her irreverence. I beg you to understand that I am not taking the part of pastors against congregations any more than I would take the part of our little girl against her pious mother, but what I write is merely to blaze the way, as

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it were, to a settlement of the question: Whether a pastor is a shepherd set over a congregation by the Almighty, or whether he is a man whom an angry God has delivered into their hands that he may suffer for his sins.

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¶ Have I said anywhere in this paper that Spring has come? Well, I say it now. It is a sad, gloomytime to man, however woman may look at it. It is now that the family man sees looming ahead the Easter bonnet trimmed with deadly \$ marks, and the Spring outfits embroidered with the same costly material. Why is this? Now, I have known X., my next door neighbor, for eleven years, and in that time I have never known him to have an Easter hat or an Easter coat or an Easter pair of pants. I saw him at the Opera lately and his wife had on a seal skin sacque, and plain X. himself had on no gloves. Why should X. be compelled to carry through life a bird of paradise, while he appears in the sombre and often shiny costume of the more humble crow? And now that I have asked that audacious question, let me ask another: Why is it that as soon as the frost of age touches a man he commences to tone down his dress, and as soon as it touches a woman she commences to tone hers up with all the hot house appliances to imitate the spring time of life. I don't ask this in a snarly spirit; but as a psychological riddle. Why is it that in November, with all her brown foliage and scarlet leaves and wind reddened sky, cannot be content with being handsome and natural, but should resort to the buds and flowers and bird-like airs of beautiful June to make her pretty. Ah, there are no flowers, no feathers, no ribbons, no latest fashions that can hold their own against Youth. Before it the milliner, the tailor and the mantua-maker are helpless to render effective assistance to Age. Ah, Youth, careless, painless, peerless, I drink to you — and put a drop of peppermint in it. Tom, I was up a little late with the boys last evening.


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### XII

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OMEHOW the town presents to me a bereaved appearance. Since the action of the authorities clearing the sidewalks, I seem to miss some of my best friends.

The tenants of the pavement had become my companions, after a fashion, so familiar were they to me. The extravagant gentleman who stood in front of the clothing store, with his change of clothes every day and the fixed stare out of his rain-washed eyes, was one of my warmest friends. He was no fair weather friend. The dusts of March, the showers of April, made no difference with him. He was there, always there, with his waterproof for the rain, his duster for the summer heat, and his sou-wester perched on his head when the Equinox set in. He had one of the most even dispositions I ever knew and always regarded me with the same mild, far-off look, whatever uniform or decoration he wore. He was the same with a blue jumper and overalls as he was with a diagonal suit with "This style \$25" flying from the button-hole. There was a great gap the morning he disappeared. The deserted street looked like a Sunday or a funeral or some other occasion of unusual sadness. I went in one day to inquire about him. I didn't have far to go; he had been tumbled into a corner with empty collar boxes, a broken coal scuttle, and some fire kindling. He appeared deeply mortified. "This is a strange fix you find me in, Mr. Boyzy," he said as he struggled to sit endwise on the bottom of the coal scuttle, "and it is a strange world we find both of ourselves in, sir. Great crimes are committed in the name of progress, sir, very great, and this is one of them. I have been a public man in this city for ten years, sir. I have guided the tastes of the public—few knew how to clothe themselves until I showed them, and few would buy their clothing until they had seen me. I have had men stand and discuss my clothes for hours, making up their minds about the spring fashions.

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These city authorities little know what they are doing. But what do they care? Look at their clothes and tell me how many of them fit. What is it to them that a public man and benefactor lies here in a pile of collar boxes? They say that the old ideas that admitted of my standing on the sidewalk are done away with, and that this is an age of progress. What sort of progress is this, that takes a man who has been prominent before the people for years and dumps him into a dustpile? Look at me! I have never lacked backbone. Why, I am all backbone. [He had a backbone of iron]. No man ever knew me to get out of the way of a crowd or go with it. I have been a consistent public man with a backbone for ten years and here I am in a dust-pile!" Here the coal scuttle slipped and my old friend tumbled into the collar boxes with a groan. As I left him I could not help thinking how many public men all consistency and backbone have made similar reputations with my dummy friend by never going with or getting out of the way of the crowd, and ended by being tumbled into the dust-bin just for the lack of a little wisdom. Alas, how like my dethroned friend we all are, in the respect of clamoring about our opinions and wrongs long after the public has forgotten both them and us.

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¶ "This is a pretty condition for me to be in now, isn't it?" asked another old friend of mine that I went to look after. "Why, don't you remember me? I'm the fish that always used to be at the door as you went by." It was true, I could hardly remember him. He used to lie in state on a board on the sidewalk on hot days, half covered with ice, and his scales looking as bright as silver. Some mornings, I am afraid I used to catch a faint whiff of his breath, but of course this was not to be remembered against him in his great trouble now. His troubles had

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greatly changed him. From the aristocratic exclusiveness of the ice-board he had been reduced to being strung up by a string through his gills to a nail in the wall. The brightness of his scales was gone, and as far as rank went, he looked as ordinary as the bunch of humble hickory shad that hung near him. "What do you think of this way of treating a fish that has come three hundred miles from the coast to help you out in Lent? What sort of infidel authorities has this city got, to string up the friend of repentance and reform in this sort of way? Why, such a town as this ought to have nothing but herrings to keep Lent with, and they ought to be salt." It was no use trying to comfort my noble friend, but I could not help thinking that, fish that he was, he was human in finding his great trouble not so much in being strung up now, as in having seen better days and more distinction. And very human he was, too, in taking the ill-treatment of himself as an offence against Lent. We are so prone to take a grievance directed against ourselves as an affront to our politics, our church, or something else to which we bear about the same relation that a fish does to Lent.



¶ The mature young woman who stood in front of the millinery store, and whom I have seen wear six different overcoats of various styles in one day, was among the victims of the new law. Her figure was one of the few that may correctly be termed wiry, but it was perfect. I may say that I have never seen a waist so slender, or a bust more perfect. But all of us have our defects; she had hers. In a fearful wind one day I made the discovery by her being blown over. She had no feet! I don't think she was the same woman after that terrible day, nor do I remember that the nose, that was turned awry by the fall, was ever straightened. When I spoke to her of the new law and her removal to a

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stand near the counter, she said it was a good thing. "No woman of proper feeling," she said with some asperity, "would have borne it as long as I did. I never wanted to stand there and be gazed at by men, it looked so bold. As for those women of brass that like it, it is all very well, but I couldn't stand it. Admiration can never compensate a right-minded woman for the staring of men. A woman must be very bold indeed to enjoy it. I like this retired corner much better than out on the walk. It has a home feeling about it, and the domestic sphere is always a true woman's choice." It was borne in upon me somehow, as I listened to her, that a woman with a broken nose and no feet will always think the woman with a pretty nose and two feet bold. There is a good deal in this saying if you will only ponder over it. Ponder it.

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Ignominiously stowed away in a back yard I saw an old friend that always brought many reflections to my mind when exhibited on the sidewalk—a coop of chickens. The most humiliated of all my old acquaintances—a dominiquer rooster—had his head up through the slats to explain the situation. "Here's a pretty howdy do!" he remarked. "What sort of treatment is this? I can't see anything here except old whiskey barrels and clothes lines and dry goods boxes. I can hardly tell when it is daybreak in this miserable old yard. Why, this morning I commenced crowing two hours too soon, and a Chinaman over there raised the window and fired a tin can at my head. I can't attend to my business in a place like this; there is another rooster around the corner been crowing all day and I can't get at him. Look you, I'm no common rooster; I'm no chicken just raised for the Town Authorities to eat; I'm a warrior. Just look at these legs and these spurs—." And just as my friend was struggling

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to get his foot up through the slats, a wash-woman in the second story emptied her soap-suds over the coop. He disappeared under the shower, amid the wild screaming of the hens. A moment later a bedraggled head, with one eye closed by suds, looked out through the side bars and remarked in a saddened voice—"I suppose the city authorities would be satisfied now—if they could see this." The sudden change in my old friend from a warrior to a bundle of wet feathers shocked me into graver thoughts.

¶ Somehow, I have never seen a coop of chickens in all its glory on the sidewalk, that I did not think of the French Revolution and the Bastille. You have seen the picture—I cannot think of the painter's name now—of the members of the old regime in the prison amusing themselves, not knowing whose name was to be called next for the guillotine? To me there is a miniature human world in a chicken coop. All under sentence of death, and all eating and drinking, and clucking and crowing as if they were going to last forever. All scrambling and fighting over the grains of daily corn, even though the hand of the fatal purchaser is already descending into the mouth of the coop. Like their human brethren who do not wear feathers, the tallest and the strongest gets his head up through the slats and gets wider views of the world. He often mistakes the single street he can see for the Universe and crows out his discovery until he is picked out of the coop and hurried off to lose his head, an operation which teaches him that in fact he has discovered nothing. How like his brother, man! All his speculations, all his telescopic philosophies, all his discoveries, find plausible support until he stumbles on an open grave. There, man and chickens are dumb. Somehow, those who write and talk about the future never impress me so much with how much they know, as with how little. How absolutely nothing they can



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tell. How echoless is the Awful Silence into which they toss their petty pebbles of theories and hopes and speculations. It seems to me that if it were not for that sensitive disc, the Conscience, which conveys to us the 'still small voice,' from a country far beyond the reach of our petty theories, the Silence that envelops this planet would be intolerable. It is unbroken even by the second great event of Life—Death. It must be a strange sight viewed from elsewhere—this terrestrial chicken coop of ours, so small that if each of its inhabitants were to touch hands they would make a ring around it, sailing through the unbroken silence of Space. A thin crust over a molten centre whirling at a thousand miles an hour. A collision, a jar, just enough to move it out of its orbit would wreck it—its surface covered with ignorant human chickens, knowing neither where they came from nor where they are going to, scratching, fighting, crowing, clucking, smoothing their feathers in vanity, and cocking their telescopes at the firmament in hungry curiosity! It is a sight that must make the Angels weep.



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**Observations of a Retired Veteran**  
**XIII**

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## Observations of a Retired Veteran

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H, here you are again! What; you don't remember me? Why, I remember you. It was last Christmas, don't you know, in this store? You were buying a mustache-cup—there now, don't blush; perhaps it was slippers, or a smoking-cap. Anyhow, it was for him. Ah; so you do remember me. But why do you call him Mr. Smith, now? It was Jack, then. You never regarded him as anything but a friend? Of course not; but, my dear, when young people begin to look upon each other as friends—you see I accent it right—it is very apt to be the overture to a very difficult opera which is as likely to end with the curtain descending to the strains of slow music as any other way. I like to see the young interchanging gifts at holiday times, but I might be allowed to suggest, as the result of the observation of an old man, be careful of what you write in sending them. You have seen pictures of Cupid—so healthful, so chubby and rosy, and such promise of long life. It is a mistake; I know of no greater invalid—none of the gods whose health is so frail. I have known a cold word to give him a fatal chill. I have seen him fly, never to return, from a mere scent—a cigarette breath. I have known him taken incurably ill at the bad fit of a Jersey or the set of an overcoat. And I have seen him lie down and die without a word and nobody ever knew the reason why; even if he knew it himself, which I very much doubt. So, you see, it will be a very wise precaution in dealing with such an uncertain god to be prepared for everything. And one preparation is to be careful of what you put on paper. Many a young girl and many a young man, in an effort to write their little notes, sending or receiving holiday presents, often overstep the mark in trying to strike the proper elevated key. Don't abound in literary gush, no matter what are your sentiments in giving or receiving; if you write at all, write a

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plain, brief, dignified note which you can read five years after with perfect satisfaction. Notes are often misunderstood, sometimes we don't exactly understand ourselves when we write them, and so it is always safer to be on the conservative side. It will often save a good deal of vain regret and many wishes to goodness that you had taken this advice.

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¶ And you here too! Going to surprise your husband with a present again? A copy of the Revised Version this time? Ah, that will give him a chance to give you a surprise next Christmas—by reading it. Ah, you should know Mrs. Boyzy, if you wish to know how to please your husband at Christmas. For now thirty years that estimable woman has opened her annual Christmas campaign on me as early as the month of October. With affectionate strategy I am lured into book stores, and variety stores, and china stores—last year she tolled me into a drug store—to discover by artful references to this thing and that, what I fancy. Now, as a matter of fact, having her, I fancy nothing else (I take it that the newest married man could get off nothing prettier than that), but I have become so used to the campaign, and also so unprincipled in my advices to shorten it, that I profess the liveliest admiration over about the second thing we come to. The result is that I often get presents of a novel character. Last year I got a hand-painted coal scuttle, and but a couple of Christmases before that, I had gotten a gaudily framed picture of some retired saint, who had been martyred and for all I know deservedly so. But the fashion of drug stores keeping holiday presents, once came near exposing my whole plan of self defence. My intense admiration of a handsomely ornamented cut glass bottle of Unfailing Lotion for Neuralgia, which I thought she was pointing out—when in fact she was

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trying to make me see a gorgeous dressing case—excited a suspicion even in her unsuspecting mind. But if I jest about this matter, it is not that I underestimate the sweetness of the practice of married people remembering each other at Christmas. I am not so sure that of all other gifts—not even excepting those to children—these are not the most disinterested and spring from the truest affection. It is no easy feat to have lived with a man for ten, fifteen, twenty years; to know his weakness thoroughly; to measure the wide distance from the heroic stature for which we took him, and the size into which thorough knowledge shrinks him; to have borne with all his eccentricities, his fault finding, his natural selfishness; to have discovered and to have known for years that he is after all like the rest of us only human, and yet at every recurring Christmas to send our affections back to the beginning and with a fresh and unimpaired love give him the mystic password of our hearts in a gift. If I sometimes laugh at the devices of my wife to find out what it is I want, I do not have the faintest smile at the patient and loving heart that inspires them. I do not know that I ever saw an angel, but, though her hair is tinged with gray, and youth has long since left her face, I never hear my wife, with her bright smile on Christmas morning, asking the old, girlish question, "What do you think I've got for you," that I don't see in it that sort of absolution for the past and benediction for the future which it is said only angels bring.

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¶ Ah, I expected to see you here! I knew you would come! Why? Ah, my boy, every veteran knows well what comes after picket firing. Let me see: at church with her, concerts, soirees—where else could you be to-day but in here buying a present? Why, you bought her that last Christmas! Oh, I see, this Christmas it is

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for another girl! Come now, don't look conscious over it. The girls can't help it; they will change now and then, It is not their fault, but still it will happen. My boy, the business you are now in has by no means been reduced to a fixed science. No calculation yet made has reduced to a certainty any way of holding a girl after you think you have her. There is a good deal of money in store for the man that makes it—when he does. But she seemed—. There now, I know all about it; but you musn't hold a girl rigidly to what you think she seems. When you get to be as old as I am, you will know that girls have a hard, hard time of it. Custom won't allow them to do anything but seem. It doesn't allow them to tell a man that they like him, and, still worse, it doesn't allow them to tell him that they don't like him. You did go there, you know, pretty nearly all last year, didn't you? What could she do? Set the dogs on you? That would have been unmistakable, but in her set that isn't allowable. Be rude to you? She is a lady, how could she be rude? She shouldn't have accepted—. There now, be fair about this thing. How could she help accepting your attentions, your bonbons, your sleigh rides, your—well, your boring generally, if you will have it—without being rude? There isn't, under our social rules, a more defenceless creature on earth than an attractive girl in society, from attentions that are wearisome and unwelcome. Nor, if she maintains the self-respecting rules that society has laid down for her, is there a more helpless creature in obtaining what she wants. You often hear it flippantly said, that if a girl loves a man she can always let him know it. There never was a greater mistake. On the contrary, the poor young things, when they find it out, so far from being able to let the young fellow know it, commence a fearful struggle to keep him from knowing it. I suppose it is, so to speak, constitutional with them, and

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they can't help it. I have seen a gentle, well-bred young girl in such agonized fear of discovery that she rudely repulsed the common advances of politeness on the part of the object. Women lose their heads on the subject of love, as often, I sometimes think, as their hearts.



¶ Why, you are only buying one little wagon this year; I thought I saw you buying two last Christmas; one of the little ones has outgrown it, I reckon? What, dead! I beg your pardon. It was thoughtless of me. Dead! Then he has outgrown it. Outgrown it all — sickness, pain, disappointments, a long, weary life — all at a single leap. But this does not comfort you. Ah, no; nothing comforts us for those we have seen slip into the dark. It will be but human in you to miss him this Christmas, and to think of the hundred ways in which he would have had pleasure if he had only lived. I think that in the death of children there is an added grief to that we feel when men and women die. They are so little, so helpless, one cannot help feeling anxious about how they will get along in the new world they have gone to; who will take care of them, and whether they will be neglected. When the time comes for putting the children to bed in the evening, we cannot help thinking about the little one who has gone from life, and wondering as we sit by the firelight whether there is any one taking care of it. We can't help feeling sure that it wants to be with its mother; it always used to when night came on. It always climbed into her lap when dark came and it surely wants to be back to-night. It cannot be happy, for it is among strangers, and if it is unhappy, there is but one place for it, its home, and but one bosom on which to lay its head, its mother's. And so our human heart talks on in its hot grief. It is a great comfort to remember, after awhile, that there is a Father



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who watches over it as tenderly as he has watched over all his children, and who will guide the little one into a new and higher life, as He will us older children who come to Him later in life, like tired and weary children seeking a mother's breast.

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¶ And so you didn't know what a castle in Spain was? Why, you have lived in one. In one! you have lived in a hundred, and if you were older you would have lived in a thousand. Why, everybody lives in castles in Spain sometimes. Let me see how to tell you about it. You know your elder sister that young Pettengill comes to see so often, and whom you hate so because you have to go to bed early? Well, your sister lives in a castle in Spain. She has had it papered and painted, and moved to another street to be near her dearest girl friend so as to make visiting convenient, and she has had the front yard fixed with flowers, particularly those he likes, and has had a door-plate put on the castle door with a name on it, CLARENCE PETTENGILL, in large letters. I remember when your father married your mother forty years ago, that she lived in a castle in Spain, and to her eyes your father was clad in shining armor and wore long plumes in his hat, and to those same eyes was a Hero of high degree. Why, even the old gentleman who is writing this to you, has lived in those castles, and as he looks back at them now with their bare walls and broken windows and tumbled down appearance generally, he often wonders how he came to build them. Some times, more especially at Christmas time, he gets on an old, and now uncertain steed called Memory, and rides back to all the castles he has lived in. So beautiful when he built them, so brightly painted by Hope and Pride and Ambition and all the other celebrated artists of that day; now so dingy and wrecked that you would hardly know

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them, and some clear faded out of sight. The castle, little one, that you are now living in has over the front door in big letters CHRISTMAS, and from its window you see such lots of fun that you will never have, such lots of presents that you will never get, and such a lot of imagining that you will never see realized. After this week is over, you will take down the big sign over the door, close the blinds, and stand watching with grieved heart while your castle fades into the air. There is nothing on earth, as you will see when you are old, that is not something like these castles in Spain, and but One Thing, that is not tainted with their evanescent life. God grant, little one, that at the end of our lives, you and I may have clung to that one thing, and that we may have so lived that the many mansions of our Father in a fairer world may not be for us — castles in Spain.

FINIS.

(Envoy)

## For a Soldier

(Henry C. Tinsley, Died August 21, 1902)

Not 'mid the din of battle long ago,  
But in the lingering clutch of later pain  
Death found him, whom we shall not see again  
Lifting a fearless front to every foe.  
Yet shall suns somewhere shine for him, and blow  
The lilies and the roses without stain,  
Who through the lengthened years in heart and brain  
Knew most of storm and winter with its snow.

For it is written in the starry sky,—  
In the vast spaces and the silences,—  
That God's eternal universe is his  
Who fears not, though he live or if he die.  
— A soldier to the dauntless end was he,  
As riding with his red artillery.

ARMISTEAD C. GORDON.









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